

**on 25 February 2013**

### **Increase in HFMD breaks two-year cycle**



STARTING THE CONFERENCE: Dr Jerip hits the gong to mark the opening of the Unimas Nursing Students' Conference (UNSC). Also seen are Songan (left) and Ahmad (second right).  
— Photo by Rusnan Mustafa

KOTA SAMARAHAN: The authorities are investigating the "unusual surge" in the number of Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) cases in the state, particularly in the Betong and Sarikei divisions.

Without providing the figure, Assistant Minister of Public Health Dr Jerip Susil yesterday explained that the increase in the number of HFMD cases was not normal because it happened outside the two-year cycle.

However, he did not consider the unusual surge as a new outbreak because "HFMD is an on-going endemic problem".

"We are now closely monitoring the situation in Saratok, Betong and Sarikei. From our experience, the cycle of HFMD should be two years, but, this time the spike comes a bit earlier," he told reporters after the opening of the Fourth Unimas Nursing Students' Conference (UNSC) at DeTar Putra at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) campus here yesterday.

Dr Jerip, who is also the Bengoh assemblyman, pointed out that it was a normal procedure for a kindergarten to be closed for at least a week if the centre had more than five reported cases of HFMD. He advised parents and caretakers to pay extra attention on young children if they developed any symptoms of HFMD.

Earlier this month, Permanent secretary to the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development Datu Dr Penguang Manggil told a press conference that the number of HFMD cases had shot up from 287 cases in January 2012 to 723 cases last month.

On another issue, Dr Jerip said more people in rural areas had contracted non-communicable diseases (NCD).

"We thought rural areas are spared from NCD but no, it is also almost a similar pattern with town areas. Maybe it is because of the change in dietary behaviour nowadays," he said.

In his opening speech, Dr Jerip said according to World Health Organisation, nearly 67 per cent of deaths of Malaysians in 2008 were due to NCD.

He said the statistic should serve as a warning to everyone that the change in lifestyle had changed the health pattern for not only the urban folks but also the rural people.

He felt that everyone should be responsible for their own health instead of depending solely on health care providers.

"Our health is our responsibility. You should have a weighing machine at home to weigh yourself. It is your responsibility to know your weight, blood pressure or sugar level."

Also present were Unimas deputy vice chancellor (research and innovation) Prof Dr Peter Songan and Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences dean Prof Dr Ahmad Hatta Rasit.

Source: **Borneo Post Online**